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RAIL TRAVEL

Vol. 2 No. 3
February 7, 1972
newsletter
#29

Last Clamdigger

ON THE COVER: Amtrak's "Clamdigger" prepares for its last southbound run from New London to New Haven, Conn., at 6:16am January 28. See story elsewhere in this issue. Photo reprinted with permission from The Day, New London, Conn.

EDITORIALS

(We offerred this space to other staff members this issue to editorialize on topics of their own choosing.)

Paul Rayton: Whither the Dining Car?

Food service is one of the most important considerations for travelers. Many times, from people accustomed to the airlines' free alimentation, the lament comes, "if only train food were less expensive!" (or "...were free" etc.)

Of course train travel is fundamentally different from an airline situation. I personally don't expect a train ticket to cover all food costs for a transcontinental trip. Still the complaint lingers about the prices. It must be acknowledged that dining cars generally are money losers. There is no question, however, that dining car service is also a necessity.

Suppose we were to attempt to make the dining cars less of a losing proposition. How would that be done? Two alternatives present themselves: increase revenues, or decrease expenses. To increase revenues, one possibility would be to raise prices of the food still higher. That might backfire, tho, in a consumer reaction to the disproportionate cost.

What about the other alternative, economy? How much can you economize in a situation where you need a good reputation? Especially a situation that is a service that needs to sell itself to a patron? The result of economy moves is loss-of-attractiveness—and another possible backfire, as people again have less motivation to patronize the dining car.

Obviously, neither of the two approaches above will accomplish the ideal end—profitability. It is time, then, to reassess the status of the dining car. It is currently a money loser; it will not conceivably run in the black in the future; nor will it be discontinued.

The new view should start by regarding the dining car not as a millstone but as a unique, positive asset. No other mode of transportation has the ability to prepare and serve totally fresh meals, char-broiled or roasted to individual order, in quality and ambience equal to or surpassing those of many ground-level restaurants.

Then, utilize modern merchandising methods. A supermarket attracts customers by offering a "loss leader." People flock to the store for the bargain. The idea of Amtrak is to get people into the train. Debunking the old fear of excessive dining car prices would be a good place to start softening the market; then sell the idea of really top-notch eating, available only in the dining cars of Amtrak. The parallel here is clear: the dining car should operate on the same basis as the supermarket special, a loss leader.

Along these lines, several events of considerable import have come to pass in the last few weeks. First, in mid-December Amtrak abolished the famous "one price ticket" of the Santa Fe. This was a plan wherein a traveler could buy along with his rail fare an extra meal ticket, valid without additional charge, for all his meals aboard. This all-inclusive ticketing eliminated the necessity of paying cash for meals—and also gave the traveler a 20-42% discount on the listed meal prices!

Now soon to come is the emasculation of the SUPER CHIEF dining car service, rendering "average" what had been the best in the country.

And Amtrak has publicly stated one goal as replacing glassware with plastic cups.

There go the no-fuss ticket, the quality food, and decent drinking glasses. These are not steps in the direction of "making the trains worth traveling again."

(continued on page 15)

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SHAKEUP AT AMTRAK

Amtrak reacted sharply to the Jan. 24 Wall Street Journal article (see last issue) that recounted Congressman Van Deerlin's bad trip on the SUNSET LIMITED and indicated that Amtrak was blaming its woes on the railroads. President Roger Lewis shot off a letter to the Journal (printed Feb. 1) and strongly denied that the corporation thinks its service is "lousy." Said Lewis, "We will match the performance of our Metroliners and the comfort of the Super Chief and other trains against the field. To say that we blame the railroads or anybody else for our deficiencies is just not the case." Lewis did not indicate what he meant by the "field."

Amtrak's Vice President-Operations Harold Wanaselja left his position abruptly Jan. 21 amid speculation that the SUNSET incident had created a stir in the corporation.

A House Commerce Subcommittee approved Feb. 2 Amtrak's request for $170 million, and late this month the full House Committee is expected to act on it. In that committee the request must get past Representative Van Deerlin, who has become a resident expert on Amtrak service after his SUNSET trip. Ironically, it was hassles over SUNSET service that brought about the ICC Adequacies Case that indirectly resulted in the legislation that created Amtrak (see RTN vol. 1 no. 23).

Western Regional Manager Robert T. Edgar got the task of explaining to Van Deerlin why his trip went bad. Said Edgar: "Van Deerlin was the victim of a very unfortunate trip and was very understanding when I gave him a detailed explanation of all of the mechanical problems that made his trip so discomforting. That is not a typical Amtrak experience. It was a comedy of errors that we hope never to repeat."

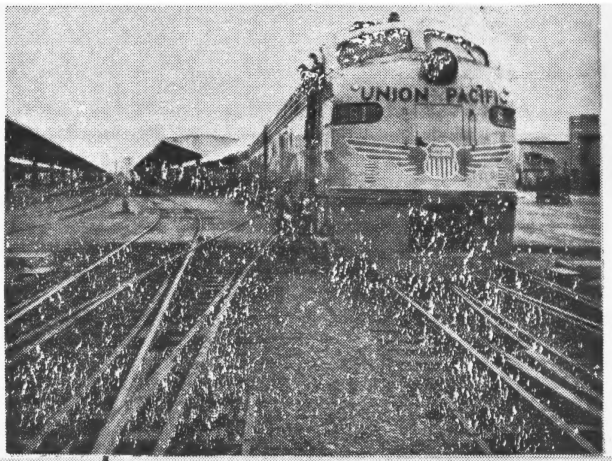
The House's version of the Amtrak funding bill requires that $147.5 million of the funds be set aside for capital improvements, and that $2 million annually be used to improve rail connections to Canada and Mexico. It also demands that passenger trains have right-of-way over freights, that Amtrak buy equipment to carry rail express and package freight, that the government move more troops by rail, that Amtrak seek ICC permission for more direct routes in some cases, and that Amtrak report annually to Congress. The bill must later be squared with the Senate version, which requires that the basic passenger route be maintained intact 2 years longer, until 1975.

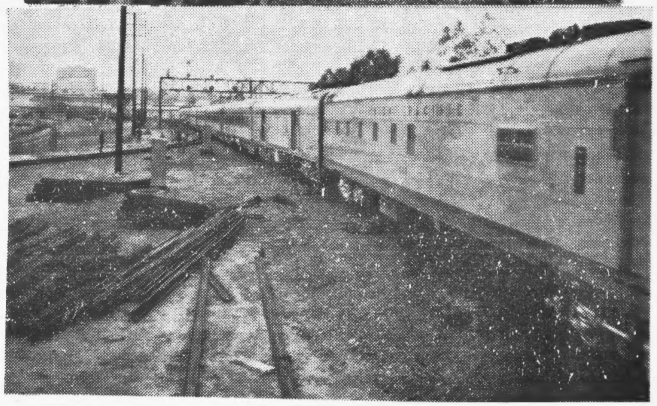
We're making the trains
worth traveling again

CORRECTED AMTRAK TIMETABLE APPEARS

Amtrak's fourth nationwide schedule, dated Jan. 16, has just reached the West Coast. Similar in size and format to the Nov. 14 timetable, the new version corrects the numerous errors of the previous edition. It also adds numerous clarifications and explanatory notes that make it easier to use. By condensing type (and with the elimination of Cleveland service) the printers were able to include four full-page Amtrak ads in the 72-page booklet. There's also a photo of an Amtrak Service Representative in uniform in the spot where the LAKE SHORE timetable formerly appeared. Most of the service changes have already been reported here. However, one cryptic note accompanying the ILLINOIS ZEPHYR schedule is unexplained: it says that major changes are contemplated for that schedule. Some railfans have speculated that it would be a suitable route on which to place TurboTrain service. For the first time, the thru Boston-Los Angeles service is specifically noted (in Southern Railway's table). The parlor car drawing on page 3 now notes in parentheses that it's a Metroclub car rather than a typical parlor car. Railfans are hoping that the schedule gets wider distribution than previous ones. For instance, Los Angeles has had no nationwide schedules since well before Christmas.

Las Vegas FUN TRAIN





WELCOME ABOARD AMTRAK'S FUN TRAIN

Amtrak's well-publicized Las Vegas Fun Train left Los Angeles for its first trip at 4pm February 4. There was a capacity house aboard, and the remaining weekend trains are selling out.

While the train got mixed reviews in the press, by and large the event was a big boost for Amtrak—surely the biggest such since the TurboTrain tour; perhaps bigger.

Nine Fun Trains all told will run before the first anniversary of Amtrak day. Feb. 4, 11, 25, Mar. 3 are the Friday dates, with return at 1:30 pm the following Sundays. The last 5 leave L.A. Sundays (Mar. 26, Apr. 9, 16, 23, 30) and return Tuesdays. Departure time of the Sunday-starting trips is 1pm.

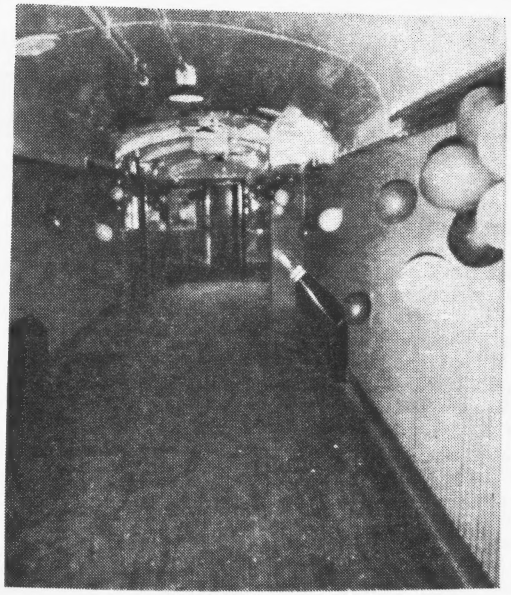
The adults-only fare is $59.95, including transportation, 2 nights in a choice of hotels or motels, and a few other goodies.

The only major complaint on the first trip was that the train was 50 mins late each way. Arriving guests in Las Vegas were inconvenienced if they'd bought theater tickets for the first evening. Freights on the UP route apparently slowed the train, and there was also talk that the 3 engines were inadequate to manage Cajon Pass.

Amtrak received over 20,000 phone calls about the service before the first train ran. Dave Rosier, Amtrak regional sales manager, said that the "depth of the market" in Southern California is better than expected, and that daily service is Amtrak's ultimate goal. Only 260 riders per trip would give Amtrak a profit. Train capacity is over 400.

The train stops for passengers at San Bernardino and for a new crew at Yermo.

First Las Vegas Fun Train sits at Los Angeles Union Station just before departure (upper left). Below, the train pulls out of the station. In the consist is seen the Santa Fe baggage car that was converted into a "ballroom." Interior of the car is at right. Multi-colored balloons decorated the walls, which were freshly painted green. Floor was wood and pre-existing light fixtures were used. Consist of train: 3 UP E9 engines, UP baggage-dorm, Santa Fe "ballroom" car, 3 Santa Fe coaches, Santa Fe lounge, UP diner, SP diner, Santa Fe lounge, four Santa Fe hi-level coaches. Photos by Paul Rayton.



REGIONAL MANAGER DISCUSSES AMTRAK PLANS

Robert T. Edgar, Amtrak's Western Regional Manager, said in an address to a group in Upland, California January 26, that Amtrak plans eventually to hire all of its own operating crews. A start has been made on Seaboard Coast Line, and it is expected that all passenger trains operating on SCL will be manned by Amtrak crews by the fall of 1972, with other roads being "Amtraked" shortly thereafter. He also said that the work rules issue would have to be eventually resolved, for reasons of economy. A start in this direction has been made in Chicago, he said, where a number of union locals, principally rail clerks, were quite cooperative in negotiating with Amtrak and forming a single local.

Amtrak is taking a close and fascinated look at Auto-Train Corporation, according to Edgar, seeking innovative ideas that Amtrak might use, including the carrying of private automobiles. He admitted that the passenger fare structure is chaotic, but that it would be resolved. A thorn in Amtrak's side is the delaying of trains on some of its routes, a problem that Mr. Edgar believes can be solved with patience and time.

—Alfred S. Voak

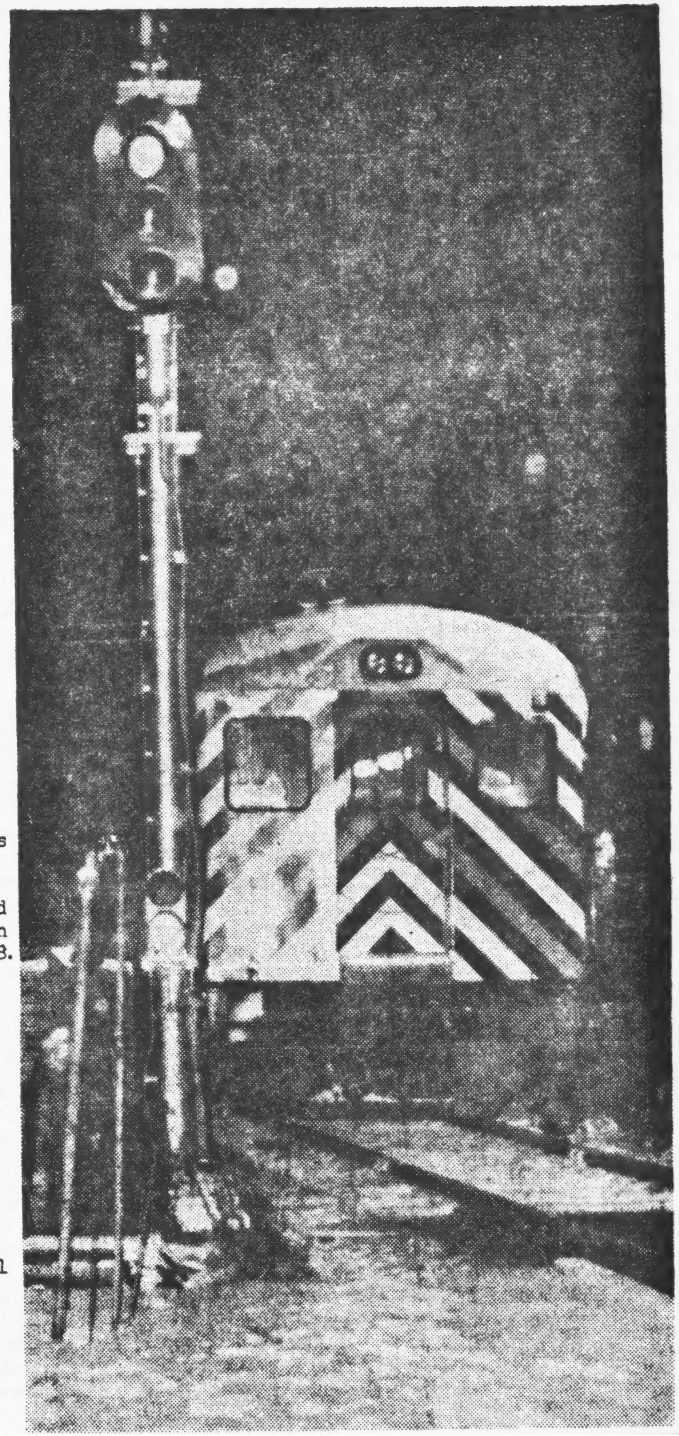
SUPER CHIEF CHANGES IN THE OFFING

The last run of the high-level EL CAPITAN diner on the SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN will be from Chicago February 20, and eastbound from Los Angeles February 22. After those dates the single SUPER CHIEF diner will be used to accommodate all the train's patrons. Gone will be the famous Champagne Dinner and the free "wake up cup" of coffee brought to sleeping car rooms. The menu to be used will be that of the TEXAS CHIEF, very similar to that of the present EL CAPITAN diner. The Turquoise Room on the SUPER will be given over to extra dining area. Amtrak might reinstate the diner in the summer.

FUTURE OF RAIL TRAVEL CARD

Employees of the Rail Travel Credit Agency now work for Amtrak. The agency recently sent questionnaires to every 15th card holder inquiring whether a small annual fee for card use would be acceptable. A large response was elicited, and the results are now being analyzed. Along with American Express and Master Charge, Rail Travel is being promoted as an Amtrak-used credit card.

Last Run for Clamdigger



The little train, a rail diesel car, was shown in Amtrak's first two schedules as # 402 & 403. It was given no name, tho riders knew it affectionately as the CLAMDIGGER. It ran weekdays as a commuter from New London to New Haven, Conn., and return. On the 1½hr trip, 51 miles, it made all the little stops: Niantic, Old Saybrook, Clinton, Madison, Guilford, Leete's Island, Stony Creek, Pine Orchard, Branford.

Then with little ado it made its last runs Jan. 28. Amtrak had quietly dropped it from the Nov. 14 timetable and given its number to a different train.

The photos here and on our cover show the last morning run—starting at 6:16 in the snowy cold (photos reprinted courtesy The Day). The powers that be recently set the schedule 10mins earlier, and ticket agents claimed no knowledge of the train tho it had run since 1898.

Amtrak got permission to drop it because of an alleged $70,000 annual deficit which the state wouldn't help pay. Critics believe the losses are overstated. They intend to continue the fight for the service.

Meanwhile the only way early morning commuters can travel the route is to take to the concrete shaft of I-95 the Federal Government has rammed thru the coastal area.

RAIL TRAVELER'S DIARY

with: **Paul Rayton**

The LAURENTIAN

Date: April 12, 1970

If railroads had theme songs for their passenger service, the Delaware and Hudson would surely have chosen "I Did It My Way." The individuality of the D&H had been a legend for years, and it held true right up until May 1, 1971.

The D&H provided above-average service to passengers: two trains daily in each direction, including an overnight run with sleeping cars. The scheduling of the trains was excellent, and amenities were not overlooked. Baggage service was available and every train carried some sort of food service. The night trains (MONTREAL LTD.) provided bar service and a Continental breakfast. The day trains (the LAURENTIAN) carried a real dining car with honest-to-goodness meals.

And the D&H provided something for the railfan too: operation of the last two surviving Alco PA engines gave the railroad yet another trump card in creating interest in its trains.

All Delaware and Hudson trains ran thru between New York City and Montreal; thus part of every thru trip was on the tracks of the Penn Central. The portion between New York and Albany is noteworthy for its scenery and will be described in a later article.

Traveling up to Albany from New York this day, we had two cars headed for Montreal. One coach was an ancient heavyweight, the other a more recent product. Both exteriors were painted in D&H blue. The heavyweight coach had cleaner windows but the other coach was absolutely idyllic for riding—the air conditioning was in tiptop shape, and the air was cool and fresh-smelling. It was too much for one old lady, tho, who promptly complained to the Conductor that it was too cold. Rather than evaluate her complaint, the Conductor accepted it as fact. His method of adjusting the temperature was to unscrew the fuse of the air conditioning unit! I knew this would lead to disaster, especially after Albany when nobody would know this man's "system." So I watched for opportune moments to screw the fuse in and out, maintaining a constant temperature. After Albany, I screwed it in and left it in. Nobody else ever complained.

In what could be the best bit of latter-day railroad scheduling (and here there were two separate companies involved, which made it all the more extraordinary) the train coming in from New York arrived at 11:10am. It was carded for a 5-min stop in the tiny "Albany-Rensselaer" station, after which it would continue west across central New York to all the major cities of the "Water Level Route" and terminate at Buffalo. Also at 11:10 another train arrived at Albany. It was just now coming in <u>from</u> Buffalo. Its schedule called for a 10-min stop, whereupon it would depart for New York. Three trains with synchronized timings. And this same 3-way synchronism would prevail in midafternoon for the southbound LAURENTIAN.

In a flash yard workers had the two cars off the Penn Central train and began to shunt them over to a nearby track, where an Alco, a baggage car, and a dining car were waiting. People were anxious for the connection to be made. They were hungry after the foodless ride up from the city.

The cars were coupled, steam and air connected. (At 11:15 and 11:20 respectively the two Penn Central trains departed.) We were scheduled to leave at 11:25, but there was a mechanical problem with the trucks of one car. We had to get a yard mechanic with the proper know-how to make the repair.

Forty minutes later we pulled out of Albany. We followed a rather different route for the first few miles than the traditional D&H route. The LAURENTIAN had been permanently rerouted to Penn Central trackage for the 17 miles to Schenectady, thence north on the D&H right of way.

With our light load, the venerable Alco had a chance to demonstrate its noted quick acceleration. My feelings were that it was "okay," but I didn't think it was all <u>that</u> fast, really.. I have seen "E" and "F" units pull out equally as fast. My most lasting impression was bad—billowing clouds of

THE LAURENTIAN

black smoke that emanated from this PA representative.

On the Penn Central we traveled fast. I clocked us at 75mph, and thought we would be making an effort to make up our lost time. Unfortunately, once we arrived on the D&H, a slow order took over and we were doomed to plod along the rest of the afternoon at speeds seldom exceeding 50mph.

That was all right with me, tho. The northern New York scenery deserved the slow, contemplative pace that we set, and I reveled in it. April had done its best, but snow patches remained on the ground. The farther north we went, the more visible the snow became. (The ground had been bare leaving Albany.) Under trees, lurking in dark glades, patches of white told their tale of winter just past. Still the trees were cloaked in grey, not yet daring to make even their first tentative ventures out into the new year, the new spring.

Our first stop on the D&H was the historic horse racing town of Saratoga Springs. The station stop for Saratoga had been moved to the outskirts of town in recent years. Yet even at that it showed a little foresight: I noted two or three stub-end tracks useful only for storage of privately owned rail cars—like during the racing season. The travelers hadn't been forgotten here.

It was time for eats now. I went forward into the dining car. The car had a layout seen nowhere else in the country. The kitchen was at the center of the car and the table space was equally divided between the two ends of the car. Each end area could seat some 14 persons. Because of the low off-season patronage, only the nearer end of these two areas was in service. The other table area was a sort of office for the crew.

On the cover of the "double duty" menu was a pleasing photograph of a D&H passenger train running along high cliffs of the west side of Lake Champlain. Inside, one half of the menu listed the bar selections; the other half was the food selection.

Full meals were very reasonable: a Baked Half Chicken, with apple sauce, carrots and peas, whipped potatoes, rolls and beverage listed at $2.50. Four other entrees were available, including Baked "Seasonal" Fish ($2.35), Corned Beef Hash ($2.10) and Tuna Salad Plate ($2.00). Minor variations in the side dishes occurred.

Lesser sandwiches were available a la carte for 90¢ - $1.50. A pot of tea on the side cost 35¢, as did most other dinner drinks.

I decided to try the fish. To accompany it I ordered a split of white wine (90¢). In all honesty, I must say that I was not overwhelmed by the fish. It too obviously had been frozen, it was dry on the tongue and—despite massive doses of lemon juice—it just didn't have much taste. The potatoes were lukewarm and slightly lumpy, the vegetables fresh out of a can. The rolls were warm but were the type that are mostly air and which crush back into dough when you try to butter them.

We came into the river settlement of Fort Edward. I could just see the rapids of the Hudson River out the window. Our passenger load doubled from 30 to 60 here, as a throng of young schoolchildren boarded for a ride on a passenger train. They would pick a day when it was 40mins late. But such a triviality didn't concern them now. A train ride would be a major event in many of their lives, one not easily forgotten. I myself was glad they were in the coach and I in the diner. Their verbally-expressed thrills soon became nerve-wracking.

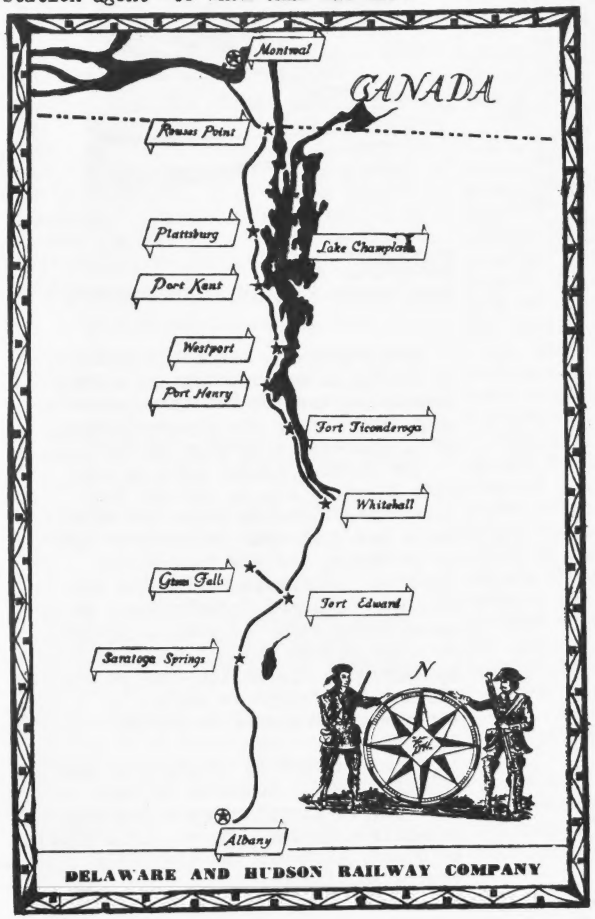
I lingered over the meal for a spell. The wine helped the situation. I was not impressed by the food itself, but I was really enjoying the meal. The interior of the dining car was pleasantly appointed and quite livable. And the scenery outside was enough to distract from even a cup of hemlock. Many times as a youth I had made this same trip north from Saratoga, north along the Champlain Canal. And today, making the trip for the first time by train, I was at last free of the deadening effects of driving. I could look around and enjoy the water in the canal, the grey skies above, and the fresh ground newly emerging from winter's grasp.

Good old D&H! I noticed that my wine glass—tho unchilled—was crystal. The D&H emblem was cut in the glass. With dessert came a silver individual creamer—again bearing the D&H emblem on the side. Both were battered from years of use, and clearly relics of bygone days, but seeing them reminded me of how good this train was, by comparison with many others running comparable distances in 1970. But the single most noticeable D&H "special" was the crew for this dining car: the only line in the country to have a waitress serving the tables!

My trip on the LAURENTIAN came to an end at Whitehall, N.Y., much to my regret. The vistas of Lake Champlain from the windows of the train would have to wait. We pulled into the station at 1:50pm, now just 30 mins late. The desolate trackside was deserted save for a youthful station agent—to whom this was merely another train—and adults meeting the schoolchildren.

Train orders were passed to the engineer, and with two blasts from the air horn the LAURENTIAN resumed its northward trek to Montreal. I stood on the platform as the train went under a bridge and disappeared around a distant bend. The cries of the children, shrill with the excitement of their adventure, quickly were boxed up into the waiting automobiles and with a roar the autos departed.

Then as I stood, a great silence descended on me and my single suitcase. No birds sang, no locust buzzed. Occasional cars went "gr-r-r-r-r-rip" across the iron lattice of the track-spanning bridge. I was alone underneath the long, classic-design wooden rainshed, stretching now along empty tracks. Already, miles separated me from the life of the train. Still, I saw it even again



THE LAURENTIAN

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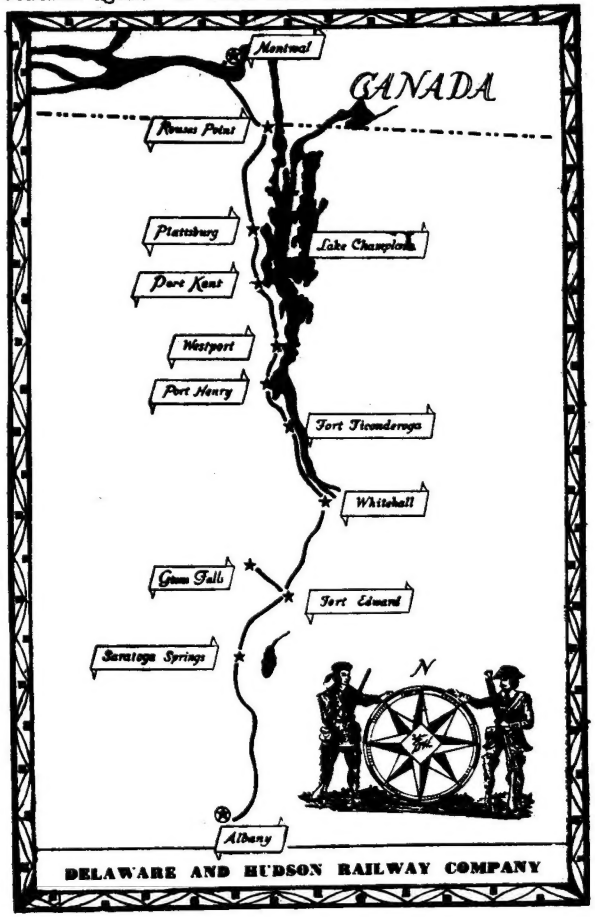

when faintly, ever so softly, the Alco's familiar horn once more spoke back across the warmth of the early spring afternoon. The sound wafted into Whitehall, edged under the rain-shed canopy, tickled past the rails and shattered against the rocky ballast. The old wood-and-brick station stood aloof and ignored the nuisance.

A newborn breeze blew a weather-weary leaf past my feet and I heard the splat of a drop of water hitting the asphalt platform. A rainstorm was arriving from the Adirondacks, so I couldn't tarry longer with the melancholy ghosts of this once great junction depot.

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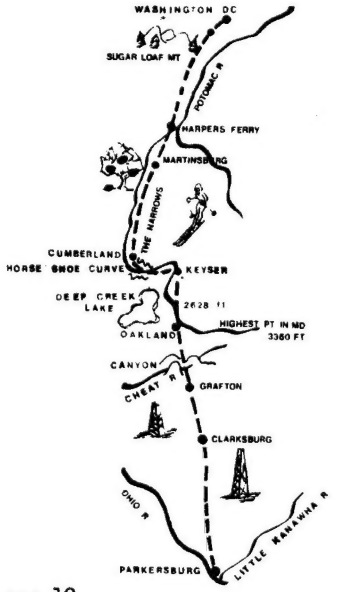
East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

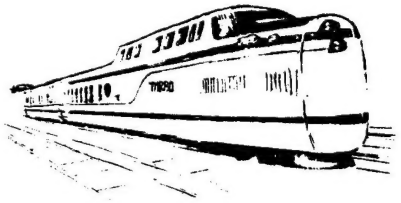
Washington DC to Parkersburg WV TurboTrain service began February 7 for a 6-month trial period. The POTOMAC TURBO's run over the mountainous B&O route begins at 4am each weekday from Parkersburg, and makes the trip to the capital in 7hrs 45 mins. Returning, the Turbo leaves DC 5:45pm weekdays. On Saturday, the Turbo makes an afternoon run, leaving Parkersburg at 12:45pm; westbound service is provided by a conventional train leaving DC at 11am and making the trip in 8hrs 55mins, 20mins faster than the previous conventional train schedule. Sunday service is provided by an 11:35am standard train eastbound, and an 11am Turbo west.



Potomac Turbo

Washington – Parkersburg

HARPERS FERRY - CUMBERLAND - CLARKSBURG



SPACE AGE

HIGH SPEED GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Brunswick, MD, had to be added as a stop in order to change crews, because an earlier B&O crew agreement lapsed with the discontinuance of DC-Cumberland service on May 1.

The Turbo trainset used on the West Virginia run is the one that made the nationwide tour. The other Turbo has just been refurbished and is providing the New York-Boston service. Amtrak is buying the two Canadian National TurboTrains. An unconfirmed rumor is that it plans to place one on another "corridor" somewhere in the nation, and possibly use the fourth as backup to the present Boston-N.Y. YANKEE CLIPPER run.

No extra fare is required on the POTOMAC TURBO. Commuter tickets are honored except between Washington-Silver Spring. Speed limit will be 85mph, although the train was tested to 115mph.

WASHINGTON - PARKERSBURG — Schedule Effective Monday Afternoon, February 7, 1972

645	643	641		Train Number		640	642	644
Potomac Turbo	West Virginian	Potomac Turbo		Train Name		Potomac Turbo	Potomac Turbo	West Virginian
Su	Sa	Ex Sa/Su		Frequency of Operation		Ex Sa/Su	Sa	Su
11:00 a	11:00 a	5:45 p	Dp	Washington	Ar	11:45 a	8:30 p	8:30 p
11:11 a	11:12 a	5:56 p		Silver Spring		11:31 a	8:16 p	8:15 p
11:49 a	11:55 a	6:34 p		Brunswick		10:52 a	7:37 p	7:32 p
11:58 a	12:05 p	6:43 p		Harpers Ferry		10:44 a	7:29 p	7:23 p
12:19 p	12:29 p	7:04 p		Martinsburg		10:23 a	7:08 p	6:57 p
1:37 p	2:02 p	8:22 p		Cumberland		9:05 a	5:50 p	5:25 p
2:11 p	2:43 p	8:56 p		Keyser		8:31 a	5:16 p	4:44 p
2:58 p	3:38 p	9:43 p		Oakland		7:44 a	4:29 p	3:47 p
4:12 p	5:05 p	10:57 p		Grafton		6:32 a	3:17 p	2:26 p
4:50 p	5:43 p	11:35 p		Clarksburg		5:54 a	2:39 p	1:45 p
6:45 p	7:55 p	1:30 a	Ar	Parkersburg	Dp	4:00 a	12:45 p	11:35 a

A February 5 press-and-exhibit run was called off at the last minute by Amtrak and DOT. The train ran west that day and east the next, but for test purposes only. However, on the morning of February 5 a radio station was still announcing the exhibition schedule. For example, a fair crowd showed up at Harpers Ferry expecting to tour the train from 10:30 to 11, only to learn that the train had left at 10:10.

The first run of the POTOMAC TURBO was a southbd run from Washington on February 7. TV cameras and the press covered the event, with Congressman Harley Staggers, head of the House Commerce Committee (who succeeded in having the Amtrak route established), officiating at ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Here's Carefree Fun and Relaxation:

Convenient, scenic "day" tours from Washington every Saturday and Sunday. Ride to Oakland and return same day — a 9½ hour "mini-tour".

Weekdays, leave Washington late afternoon, have a full Saturday in the mountains, return early Sunday evening.

Visit Washington. Convenient weekday schedules allow a full six hours "in town".

And "Turbo" Offers:

Movies, Stereo Music, Delicious Meals, Snacks, Refreshment, Deep Adjustable Seating, "Vista Dome" viewing areas plus unique suspension for speed and comfort.

Food and beverage service on all trains. Trains 643 and 644 are standard equipment. Reduced fare tickets not honored between Washington and Silver Spring.

The POTOMAC TURBO is placed in experimental service through the cooperation of the U. S. Department of Transportation. This schedule supersedes that published January 16, 1972.

One-way fare for the complete run between Washington and Parkersburg is $20. One dollar gets you from Washington to Silver Spring, MD.

TWO MAGNIFICENT rail excursions were operated February 5 and 6 between Baltimore and Hagerstown over the Western Maryland Railway. The trips were sponsored by Steam Tours of Akron, Ohio, and the Chesapeake Division, Railroad Enthusiasts, Laurel, Maryland.

The train was powered by Reading 4-8-4 No. 2102 and had 18 cars, all heavyweights except for a Milwaukee Road baggage car. Consist front to rear: 6 B&O coaches (owned by RR Passenger Cars), WM steam generator combine, Milwaukee baggage car (Steam Tours), 2 RF&P coaches (Greenbriar RR), B&O food bar coach, 5 RF&P cars, B&O parlor-observation (Baltimore Chap. NRHS), and a High Iron Co. open platform observation. The trains went west via the Dutch Line thru Gettysburg, east via the Main Line.

The highlight of the trips came on the Sunday return trip. Snow started falling heavily at Hagerstown about 4pm, and the climb up to Blue Ridge Summit in the snowstorm will never be forgotten by the 800 passengers aboard. Even after dark and despite the snow and cold, passengers crowded to the vestibules to watch the 2102 and two WM Alco cab unit helpers lift the 18 brightly-lit coaches up the mountain at a steady 20mph. We don't know how the highway-bound got home that night.

CONSIST OF C&O #98 February 7: C&O GP40 and GP9 engines, GN dome, B&O tavern baggage. One hour, 15 mins late at Lee Hall, Virginia.

CURRENT AMTRAK ad (in Northeast newspapers February 1) pictures a couple seated in a pair of coach seats, a string of which are laid out down the middle of a track. Caption reads: "Please be seated on an Amtrak coach. Just as fast as a bus and a lot more comfortable." The ads are to push conventional train service in the Northeast Corridor.

PENN CENTRAL will auction off over 100,000 items from its museum and library of historic railroad memorabilia. The public auction takes place at the Philadelphia PC station March 20, 21 and 22.

COMMUTER CLASSROOMS on the Long Island Rail Road and the Jersey Central, mentioned here previously, are reportedly quite successful, so that Erie Lackawanna wants to follow suit, and Penn Central is being approached about similar arrangements.

THE FLORIDIAN began using Chicago Union Station effective January 23. The train has a 2½-hr longer schedule, arriving Chicago 9:30am, leaving at 9pm. It had been running 1-2 hours late, largely because of the PC slow order at Kankakee, IL. The train is re-routed between Chicago and Indianapolis from IC and PC track via Lafayette to PC track via Logansport. The schedule south of Indianapolis is unchanged from Amtrak's Jan. 16 timetable (but different from the Nov. 14 schedule).

PERSONS INTERESTED in rail commuter service in the Baltimore-Washington area should write to Railways of the Americas, 1776 K St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington DC 20006.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"What's new with Amtrak, savior of the American railroad system? Well, reports Carl Nolte, boy buff, the clock in Oakland's 16th St. station is running again after all these years—but two minutes slow. And the train to L.A., which he took, was a hour and a half late, but, as he says, 'What can you expect of an outfit that can't even make the time run on time?'"

—Herb Caen, San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 10

"Amtrak is actually turning away business because several key railroads are refusing to accept commercially-operated private cars on Amtrak's trains. ... A study of Amtrak's contract with the carriers clearly indicates to us that the railroads' position is 'legally unsupportable.' We feel it is time for Amtrak to get off dead center, stop playing the railroads' traditional obstructionist game, and demand that this needed addition to the present passenger fleet be allowed to operate."

—NARP newsletter editorial, January

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB ***

"As for the diner—well, I'd read in an ad that there's a gourmet steak inside Amtrak trying to get out. It didn't succeed on No. 53."*

—D. P. Morgan in Trains magazine, March

(So that's where they're hiding the Champagne Dinner!)

* The ad in question that mentions Amtrak's "gourmet streak" is reproduced on p. 29 of the Jan. 16 nationwide timetable. Many have misread it as "gourmet steak."

"In the first two weeks of this month, the performance sagged a bit. Only 7.2% of the Amtrak trains ran on time; the others averaged one full hour late."

—Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24 (Pacific Coast Edition)

(Good thing it only sagged a bit.)

"...even AC Transit's newer buses, considered among the more modern in decor, pale by comparison to the new Golden Gate coaches, with their wide aisles and extra legroom."

—Oakland Tribune, Feb. 6

(Nothing's so bad as the coma prison of a bus.)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

CAMPAIGN TRAIN: Senator Edmund Muskie has hired a 5-car train from Amtrak for $5000 to tour Florida preparatory to next month's primary election. First such train since Robert Kennedy's in 1968..... HIGH-SPEED rail line from San Francisco to Los Angeles is proposed by the director of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission as preferable to another airport with all the attendant environmental destruction..... GOOD WORDS from a sharp governor, Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania (in NARP newsletter, Jan.): "We should be rebuilding our railroads. I am not just talking about mass transit—I am talking about all railroads. Every other nation in the world is doing it. We are just assuming that railroads are a thing of the past, when actually they are the transportation of the future" (emphasis added)..... NARP UNCOVERED a bit of a bombshell when it found a DOT briefing manual for the Incorporators of Amtrak that indicated the DOT's projections for Amtrak's financing were based on having "an information, ticketing, reservation and credit system" finished and at least partly working by last May 1. Also it insisted that tour agents' summer packages are the "single most important annual revenue item" for Amtrak. By these criteria Amtrak is way behind schedule.....

* * *

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT has decided that both CP's and CN's trains from Montreal to the Maritime Provinces are necessary and thus qualified for government subsidies. The CP run from Montreal to St. John crosses the state of Maine and is the only regular passenger train running there..... HARTFORD COURANT reports (says reader Jan Lindberg) on projected resumption of N.Y.-Montreal service. Amtrak hasn't decided the route yet. Amtrak, angered at Gov. Rockefeller for lack of support for the LAKE SHORE, may route the train via Hartford, Springfield, & Brattleboro, Vermont. Evidently the Boston & Maine wants no part of it, so train would go from NYC to Hartford & Springfield and then over to Palmer to pick up Central Vermont tracks and then to Amherst, Brattleboro, White River Junction, etc. Disadvantage: slow speeds on CV tracks. Advantage: opening up the schools (Amherst, etc.) and ski areas for trains from NYC and Boston..... THE DOME on the CITY OF SF was gone only a short while; was taken off when SCL observation appeared. But the obs was bad-ordered and sent back. So far every piece of new equipment sent to Oakland since May 1 has been bad-ordered by SP and returned. Only survivors: Santa Fe coaches now on COAST STARLIGHT and (big deal!) Santa Fe baggage car on DAYLIGHT. Others returned: L&N lunch counter diners, Santa Fe lunch counter diners, SCL diners, & C&O dome that wouldn't meet clearances. So it's on with the tired SP equipment, and rumor has it that SCL doesn't want to run SP cars sent east and is calling them "junk"..... CITY OF SF, we reported some time ago, was to go daily last December. Now you can look for that to happen around June 1.....

* * *

REFURBISHED EQUIPMENT may be around your way by summer, but time's running out. A trickle of cars is coming out of the small Kratville shops in Omaha & from Hamburg Industries in South Carolina, which had previously done work for SCL. Meanwhile, 50 or 60 cars sit at Pullman-Standard in Chicago and 75 outside PC's Beech Grove shops near Indianapolis while internal labor problems, over which Amtrak has little control, are being worked out..... SEATTLE-VANCOUVER service should start early this summer, possibly with rail diesel car equipment..... RAIL SUPPORTER for President? Senator Vance Hartke is in the running, has lashed out at present Administration for lack of leadership vis-a-vis trains, and criticised Roger Lewis for not giving Amtrak "bold initiative"..... AUTO-TRAIN riders who didn't have the advertised new equipment over holidays are getting partial refunds—about 200 people so far..... EMPIRE BUILDER derailed eastbound near Cut Bank, Mont. recently when it hit ice on tracks. We don't have the date. Four of 71 riders injured..... LAKE SHORE replacement could be Cleveland-Buffalo and a separate Cleveland-Chicago train, Amtrak has proposed.....

Urban-Suburban Transit

DOT STINGY WITH RAPID TRANSIT MONEY

Because of the difficulty of convincing Congress and the Administration to make needed funds available, the Dept. of Transportation finds itself in the position of quietly advising some cities that want rapid transit systems to forget them and rely on road vehicles. At least 12 cities are now building or planning mass transit rail systems, reports the New York Times. But the DOT is trying to adopt some criteria by which an urban area might qualify for rapid transit. This move is being criticized by transit proponents, who argue that there are no such criteria for funding of highways, airways, or waterways. While Congress appropriated $900 million for transit for the present fiscal year, the Administration has held back one third of that amount. The DOT says it needs $6.9 billion more thru 1982. (To put that amount in perspective, the Interstate Highway System has cost over $76.3 billion thus far, $6 billion of which was added on to original estimates in the past two years because of inflation and need to correct errors in planning to reduce environmental destruction.)

NARP URGES HELP FOR SKYROCKETING COMMUTER FARES

The relaxation of the Federal price freeze will bring on a new round of rail commuter fare increases that will "hit practically every railroad commuter line in the Nation," predicted NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell late last month. He urged Congress to pass the Urban Transportation Emergency Relief Act, sponsored by Congressman Edward I. Koch of New York. This bill would set aside $1 billion over a 5-year period to help offset transit deficits by paying for maintenance and repair of rights-of-way, tracks, and other facilities. Over the past 17 months there have been 23 requests for rail commuter fare increases in our country's largest cities (see NARP's table below).

Date of Request or Approval	Railroad	Metro. Area	% Increase	No. Daily Riders
1/72	LI	New York	16.66	260,000
1/72	B&M/PC	Boston	10	25,000
12/71	Rdg/PC	Philadelphia	12	118,000
5/71	SP	San Francisco	10	23,000
5/71	PRSL	Philadelphia-N.J.	10	200
5/71	IC	Chicago	7	84,000
5/71	MILW	Chicago	5-10	23,000
5/71	PC	New York	10-25	84,000
5/71	PC	Chicago	25	400
5/71	C&NW	Chicago	7	90,000
4/71	B&O	Balt./Wash.,D.C.	7	1,000
4/71	CSS&SB	Chicago-N. Ind.	75 average	9,000
4/71	PC	Balt./Wash,.D.C.	25	500
3/71	EL	N.J.-N.Y.	15	70,000
3/71	BN	Chicago	6	40,000
3/71	Rdg/PC	Philadelphia	10	118,000
1/71	CNJ	New Jersey	15	25,000
1/71	GTW	Detroit	1-10	1,400*
12/70	PC	N.J.-N.Y.	25	33,000
11/70	B&O	Pittsburgh	10	1,000
11/70	CRI&P	Chicago	6	26,000
9/70	B&M/PC	Boston	10	25,000
8/70	EL	Cleveland	35	250
				1,057,750

*Request Withdrawn by railroad

BRIEF NOTE: Southern Pacific wants to reduce its already-sparse weekend S.F.-San Jose commuter service to a token one or two trains.

(continued from page 2)

Steve Farrar: The Case for Rerouting the FLORIDIAN

We were shocked recently to discover that the steam-powered FLORIDA SUNBEAM of 1936 was one hour faster from Chicago to St. Petersburg and 25 minutes faster to Miami than the FLORIDIAN in 1972. The SUNBEAM carried thru cars from Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland via Big Four to Cincinnati, Southern to Hampton, Fla., thence Seaboard. The train had a night-day-night schedule almost identical to today's Amtrak run, except it used a more direct route and served Cincinnati and Atlanta.

We are suggesting that it would probably be to Amtrak's advantage to reroute its Florida service via Cincinnati and Atlanta. Since Amtrak has chosen not to exercise its right to use the trackage of non-member roads, consideration is given here only to routes not involving Southern.

One logical route would be Chicago-PC-Cincinnati-L&N-Knoxville-L&N-Atlanta-Cent. of Ga.-Savannah. At Savannah, the Chicago train could be added to the SILVER STAR for the run to Florida. To provide feeder revenue and to serve important cities skipped by this route, we suggest a route from Detroit and Toledo to Cincinnati via B&O, thence via I&N to Louisville, Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile and New Orleans. Thru cars could be run from Chicago and Detroit to New Orleans, St. Petersburg and Miami. And, assuming a 7:30am train time at Cincinnati southbound and 11pm northbound, thru cars could even be run between Nashville and New York via the C&O.

Since revenues are reportedly poor on the FLORIDIAN as presently routed, it certainly wouldn't hurt to experiment.

Richard Tower: A Modest Proposal

Many of the thousands of G.I.s who traveled aboard Southern Pacific troop trains during World War II found increased enjoyment in their trips because of two little booklets which briefly described the men, equipment, and operations of their host railroad. The idea for these booklets, "Welcome to Southern Pacific" and "Who Calls the Call Boy?" came from SP's president A. T. Mercier, who believed there was a little bit of rail fan in every American. Mercier also realized the more his passengers knew about operating problems, the less anxiety they would feel over wartime delays and congestion.

It was a good idea then, and it's a good idea now. As Amtrak attracts new customers, a little lesson in railroading wouldn't hurt. There is no reason why block signals, slow orders, and mileposts should be mysteries to train riders. Nor should section gangs, car knockers, or dispatchers go unsung just because they are unseen.

Naturally, a railroad primer on every seat can't excuse delays or rough track, but a better appreciation of operating problems and how they are overcome can help put a passenger's mind at ease. And don't forget that many miles of boredom can be dispelled studying the intricacies of CTC, ribbon rail, symbol freights, and seconds between mileposts if only you know what to look for.

How the trains run is a fascinating story, Amtrak, and telling it is just plain good public relations.

BACK ISSUES of RTN are available at 25¢ each. We must ask you to order back issues separately; we cannot back-date subscriptions due to the clerical expense. All 28 back issues are available with these exceptions: 7 thru 10, 13 thru 15, 21. If out of an issue, we will credit your subscription with an extra issue (if you are a current subscriber) unless you indicate otherwise. Order from Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Back issues are sent by third class mail.

ANNOUNCEMENT TO SUBSCRIBERS: Reluctantly, we must raise the subscription rate of RTN. Effective March 15 the yearly rate will be $6.00. This increase will enable us to continue sending the newsletter by first class mail and to continue and improve the features readers have told us they want. Our reader survey of last December indicated overwhelmingly that respondents preferred this course of action. By lifting our rate--as the Wall Street Journal would put it--we will be able to break even and continue to bring you RTN as you like it.